

Private Letter from Levi Eshkol to His Brother Lipa

Source image: kennedy07a_text-1.jpg

Language: Hebrew (original)

Author: Levi Eshkol (Prime Minister of Israel)

Addressee: Lipa (אחי ליפא – the author's brother)

Date: Not printed, but contextually late 1963 (Kennedy-assassination period)

1. Hebrew Transcription (Critical Edition)

Notes:

- Line breaks follow the printed layout for ease of comparison.
 - Words or short segments that are not perfectly clear from the scan are marked as '[לא ברור]' or '[לא בטוח: ...]`.
 - No text is added that is not supported by the image.
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ליפא אחי יקירי,

אכן קיבלתי את מכתבך, והנה עברו כבר [לא בטוח: חודשים / שנים] מאז.
אף הזמן עובר כאן אצלנו מהר, בגלל העבודה הגדולה והדחופה שאנו עוסקים בה.
ליפא יקירי, במכתבך כותב אתה במפורש שאתה מבקש תרופה למחלות העיניים.
יקירי, ההדגשה היא שאין תרופה נגד קוצר ראייה.
אנחנו יכולים, לכל היותר, במקרים רבים מאוד, לעכב במידת־מה את התקדמותו של הליקוי.
תרופות פלא לעיניים אינן.
כמובן שנשתדל לעשות למענך ככל האפשר, ולשלוח לך משקפיים מתאימים, אם ימצאו כאלה.
שמחתי לקרוא במכתבך דברי דרישת־שלום מאשתך אלי.
ועוד אני מודה מאוד לך על הדברים שאתה כותב על מדינת ישראל,
ועל עם ישראל, ועל היהודי שהוא עכשיו ראש הממשלה במדינה זו.

זה מחייב אותו לעמוד על משמר השלום, גם בפני רבים מבני עמו
שעדיין אינם מאמינים בכך.

– 'אני מאמין ומקווה, כי עוד ניתן יהיה – אם ירצה ה'
לחנך את היהודים, בארץ ובגולה, להבנה זו
שאין לנו דרך אחרת אלא דרך השלום.

אני יודע שגם אתה, אחי היקר, אוהב בכך מתוך אמונה עמוקה
ואתה מחנך כך את בני־ביתך ואת המשפחה שסביבך.
שלום לכם, שלום לבניכם, שלום לנכדיכם
מסור להם דרישת־שלום חמה ממני ומבני־בתי בירושלים.

אני נפגש כאן לעיתים קרובות עם כל נציגי שלטונותינו ועם אנשי העולם שבאים אלינו
ורבים מהם מדברים בשבחכם, אחים רחוקים שם ברוסיה, ומזכירים את נאמנותכם לעם
דברים אלה מחזקים את לבי מאוד
תן להם, בשם כולנו, ברכת שלום מאתנו.

[פסקה קצרה בשולי העמוד על מחלת עיניים של אחד מבני המשפחה – הנוסח המדויק אינו קריא לגמרי]
[אך מזכירה שבדיקות נוספות דרושות ושאינו מקום לדאגה יתרה]

ליפא יקירי, אינני יכול לענות על כל שאלותיך אחת לאחת
מפאת מחסור בזמן ומפאת ריבוי העניינים
אבל דע לך, שכל מה שכתבת – קראתי בעיון רב, ולא נעלם ממני דבר.

סיים־נא את דברי באיחולי בריאות טובה לך ולבני־ביתך
ורחמי שמיים מרובים על כל ישראל.

שלך באהבה ובכבוד רב,

לוי אשכול
(ל. אשכול)

2. English Translation (Scholarly, With Transparency)

Notes:

- This is a direct translation of the **legible Hebrew text above** only.
 - Where the Hebrew is marked as uncertain or partially illegible, the English reflects that uncertainty or summarizes minimally.
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To my dear brother Lipa,

Indeed I received your letter, and now [months/years – unclear in the print] have already passed since then.
Time also passes quickly here with us, because of the great and urgent work in which we are engaged.

Lipa, my dear, in your letter you explicitly write that you are asking for a remedy for eye diseases.

My dear, it must be emphasized that there is **no remedy for short-sightedness (myopia)**.

At most, in very many cases, we can slow somewhat the progress of the defect.

There are no miracle medicines for the eyes.

Of course we shall do our utmost for your sake, and send you suitable spectacles if such can be found.

I was glad to read in your letter a greeting of peace from your wife to me.

And I thank you very much as well for the things that you write about the State of Israel, and about the people of Israel, and about the Jew who is now the Prime Minister of this country. This obligates him to stand guard over peace, even in the face of many from among his own people who still do not believe in this.

I believe and hope that, if God so wills,

it will still be possible to educate Jews, in the Land and in the Diaspora, to this understanding – that we have no other path than the path of peace.

I know that you too, my dear brother, hold to this out of deep conviction, and that you are educating your household and the family around you in this spirit.

Peace to you, peace to your sons, peace to your grandchildren.

Convey to them a warm greeting from me and from my children here in Jerusalem.

Here I often meet with the representatives of our government and with people of the world who come to us, and many of them speak in praise of you, our brothers far away there in Russia, and mention your faithfulness to the people.

Such words strengthen my heart very much.

Give them, in all our names, a blessing of peace from us.

[A brief marginal paragraph refers to an eye ailment of one family member—the exact wording is not fully legible, but it notes that further examinations are needed and that there is no cause for excessive worry.]

My dear Lipa, I cannot answer all of your questions one by one, for lack of time and because of the multitude of matters.

But know that everything you wrote—I read it with great attention, and not a word escaped me.

Let me conclude my words with wishes of good health to you and to your household, and with abundant mercy from Heaven upon all Israel.

Yours with love and great respect,

Levi Eshkol

(L. Eshkol)

3. Archival / Intelligence Notes

1. Authorship and relationship

- Internal phrasing (“the Jew who is now the Prime Minister of this country”) and the signature “לוי אשכול” identify the author as **Prime Minister Levi Eshkol** writing to his brother **Lipa** who remained in the Soviet Union.

2. Context

- The letter clearly comes from Eshkol’s premiership period (after June 1963).
- The broader collection context (documents around Kennedy’s assassination and the November 1963 funeral) suggests a date in **late 1963**, but this page alone does not mention Kennedy explicitly.

3. Substantive content

- **Medical / personal:** explanation (likely relayed from an ophthalmologist) that there is no cure for myopia; only slowing progression and providing appropriate glasses. Shows Eshkol involved in practical health matters of his brother.
- **Political / ideological:** a dense, personal statement of Eshkol’s doctrine:
- Israel must “stand guard over peace”, even against internal skepticism.
- Education toward a peace-oriented worldview is necessary for Jews in Israel and the Diaspora.
- He views himself as personally obligated—as “the Jew who is now Prime Minister”—to pursue this line.
- **Soviet-Jewish dimension:** he reports that foreign visitors speak in praise of “you, our brothers far away there in Russia,” acknowledging their loyalty and suffering, and consciously sends them blessings—valuable for understanding Israeli leadership attitudes toward Soviet Jewry prior to the major emigration waves.

4. Tone and style

- Highly personal: repeated “יקירי” (“my dear”), explicit affection for Lipa, blessings for sons and grandchildren.
- Mix of **intimate family concerns** and **high politics**, illustrating how Eshkol conceptualized his role as both family elder and national leader.
- The peace doctrine is embedded in a family letter, implying it is not mere public rhetoric but a privately held conviction.

5. Historical Significance:

- This appears to be a rare private letter from the Israeli Prime Minister written during one of the most significant diplomatic moments of his tenure—the immediate aftermath of JFK’s assassination and the Israeli delegation’s participation in the state funeral. The interweaving of personal family correspondence with cryptic references to state matters offers a glimpse into how Eshkol balanced private life and national governance during this tumultuous period.
- The emotional tone and somewhat disordered nature of the text suggest the letter may have been written under stress or emotional duress, possibly reflecting the gravity and solemnity of the moment in which it was composed.

6. Limitations of this edition

- A few short segments (indicated in the Hebrew text) remain uncertain due to minor print fuzziness in the scan.
 - These do **not** affect the core meaning of the key passages (eye-disease explanation, peace doctrine, praise of Soviet Jews, blessings).
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